FESTUCA ROEMERI – PLECTRITIS CONGESTA

Roemer's fescue – rosy plectritis

Abbreviated Name: FERO-PLCO

Synonym: *Festuca idahoensis var. roemeri – Plectritis congesta*

Sample size = 9 plots

DISTRIBUTION: This grassy bald association occurs mostly around the periphery of the Puget Trough on foothills of the Olympic Mountains and in southeastern Thurston County. It occurs occasionally in the San Juan Islands and vicinity and near Camas, Clark County. County distribution includes San Juan, Skagit, Clallam, Mason, Thurston, and Clark. It may also occur in the adjacent Georgia Basin of British Columbia.

GLOBAL/STATE STATUS: GNRS1. There are very few known occurrences and they are highly threatened by invasion and increase of non-native species, and to a lesser degree, by invasion of trees. Other threats include development, road-building, timber harvest, and recreational impacts.

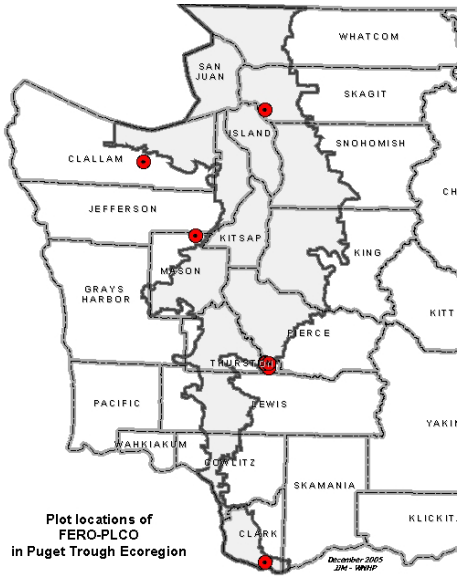
ID TIPS: Dominated or co-dominated by Roemer's fescue. Slopes with shallow soils (rock outcrops usually present or adjacent). Rosy plectritis has greater than 5 percent cover.

ENVIRONMENT: These sites are moist in the spring but very dry later in the summer. They consist of the partially shaded portions or edges of balds or seasonally moist (but not as wet as some) microsites within more extensive balds. Occurs primarily on mid- to upper slopes, with southern to western aspects. Soils are shallow over sedimentary or volcanic bedrock. Rock outcrops (often covered with mosses) are typically present within or directly adjacent to the association. Soils are mostly loam in texture, but can be gravelly or sandy. This association is more common in moderate to high precipitation climates.
Precipitation: 29-73 inches (mean 56)
Elevation: sea level to 1700 feet
Aspect/slope: ESE to WNW/ 11-96% slope (mean 42)
Slope position: upper, mid
Soil series: rock outcrop

DISTURBANCE/SUCCESSION: Historically, some of the balds where this association occurs were more extensive than currently due to indigenous human burning practices. Other sites may not be much different in size than in the past (especially those in more montane areas). Douglas-fir may be able to

Vegetation Composition Table (selected species):
Con = constancy, the percent of plots within which each species was found;
Cov = cover, the mean crown cover of the species in plots where it was found;
+ = trace (< 0.5% cover).

Graminoids	**Kartesz 2005 Name**	**Con**	**Cov**
Roemer's fescue	Festuca roemeri	100	45
soft brome	Bromus hordeaceus	67	5
California danthonia	Danthonia californica	67	4
common velvet grass	Holcus lanatus	56	6
California brome	Bromus carinatus	56	4
silver hairgrass	Aira caryophyllea	56	4
wood-rush	Luzula (comosa, multiflora ssp. multiflora)	56	2
blue wildrye	Elymus glaucus	44	3
barren fescue	Vulpia bromoides	33	6
rat-tail fescue	Vulpia myuros	33	6
hedgehog dogtail	Cynosurus echinatus	22	12
Forbs and Ferns			
rosy plectritis	Plectritis congesta ssp. congesta	100	20
farewell-to-spring	Clarkia amoena	89	3
rattlesnake weed	Daucus pusillus	89	2
cleavers	Galium aparine	78	3
common camas	Camassia quamash	67	5
small-flowered deervetch	Lotus micranthus	67	3
Wallace's selaginella	Selaginella wallacei	56	3
large-flowered blue-eyed mary	Collinsia grandiflora	44	17
yarrow	Achillea millefolium var. occidentalis	44	2
slender tarweed	Madia gracilis	44	2
meadow death camas	Zigadenus venenosus var. venenosus	44	2
tall annual willow-herb	Epilobium brachycarpum	44	+
self-heal	Prunella vulgaris ssp. lanceolata	33	11
hyacinth brodiaea	Triteleia hyacinthina	33	6
field chickweed	Cerastium arvense ssp. strictum	33	4
licorice fern	Polypodium glycyrrhiza	33	3
early saxifrage	Saxifraga integrifolia	33	2
common vetch	Vicia sativa	33	2
sticky chickweed	Cerastium glomeratum	33	1
gold-back fern	Pentagrama triangularis ssp. triangularis	33	1
chocolate lily	Fritillaria affinis var. affinis	33	+
hairy cat's-ear	Hypochaeris radicata	22	11



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establish on these sites in the absence of fire, particularly shaded edges. Overall there is considerable likelihood that these sites, in the absence of fire, could be eventually converted to coniferous woodlands or forest.

VEGETATION: This is grassland or mixed grass-forb dominance, dominated or co-dominated by the bunchgrass Roemer's fescue. The forb rosy plectritis is always prominent to co-dominant. Large-flowered blue-eyed mary is prominent to co-dominant in about half the plots, and self-heal in one-third of them. Frequent native herbaceous species include farewell-to-spring, rattlesnake weed, cleavers, common camas, small-flowered deervetch, California danthonia, California brome, and wood-rush. Wallace's selaginella (habit similar to a moss) is usually present on small rock outcrops within the association. Mosses and lichens typically cover the space between grasses and forbs. Frequent non-native species are soft brome, common velvetgrass, and silver hairgrass. Hairy cat's-ear and hedgehog dogtail occasionally contribute substantial cover.

CLASSIFICATION NOTES: This association has not been previously described in the literature.

MANAGEMENT NOTES: Monitoring of Douglas-fir establishment and removal of Douglas-fir saplings is recommended in order to prevent gradual forest encroachment. Scot's broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), a nitrogen fixing non-native shrub, is a potential severe threat that should be monitored and controlled. Native species composition is threatened by increase and expansion of non-native grasses. Recreational projects such as new trails, as well as timber harvest activities and road-building, should avoid high-quality examples of this association because of the potential for spread of non-native species and relatively fragile soils.

BIODIVERSITY NOTES: Federal/state candidate Taylor's checkerspot (*Euphydryas editha taylori*), a butterfly, and state sensitive common bluecup (*Githopsis specularoides*), a plant, are known to occur in this association. Many more common, though probably declining, plant species are strongly associated with this plant association. Grassy balds are important habitat for many native butterfly species.

Chappell, C.B. 2006. Upland plant associations of the Puget Trough ecoregion, Washington. Washington Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program, Olympia, WA. [http://www.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/communities/pdf/intro.pdf].